

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, April 9, 2019 Meeting | 7:00 p.m.
Council Chambers, Woburn City Hall, 10 Common Street, Woburn, MA

Chair Dave Edmonds called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and asked Planner Karen Smith to call the roll.

Mr. Kevin Donovan, Mr. Bob Doherty, Ms. Claudia Bolgen, Mr. Jim Callahan, Mr. Michael Ventresca, Ms. Carolyn Turner, and Chair Dave Edmonds were present. Also present was City Planner/Grant Writer Dan Orr.

Edmonds asked if there were any Approval Not Required (ANR) applications before the Board this evening and Orr responded that there are none.

PUBLIC HEARING: PROPOSED ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT to amend the 1985 Woburn Zoning Ordinances by revising Section 13 (Sign Regulations) and adding a new Section 31 entitled Billboards in order to allow electronic billboards by City Council Special Permit on lots directly abutting Interstate I-93 and which are in the OP-93 and IP-2 Zoning Districts / 10 Presidential Way Associates LLC

Attorney Joseph Tarby, Law Firm of Murtha Cullina LLC, 600 Unicorn Park, Woburn, MA, on behalf of the applicant, American Tower, 10 Presidential Way, Woburn, MA introduced Business Representative Brandon Ruotolo of American Tower.

Ruotolo, Land Acquisition Manager for American Tower, 10 Presidential Way, Woburn, MA, (phone number 781-926-4737) provided a brief overview of the company, stating the company moved to Woburn in 1999 and is now one of the largest real estate investment trusts in the world. Ruotolo presented a two-minute video describing American Tower as a leader in the development and deployment of shared wireless infrastructure. Ruotolo noted that American Tower started as a tower company and has diversified with the changing wireless market. A cell tower is similar to an outdoor advertising structure and has the capacity to be wirelessly enabled. Currently, within the industry, no one has developed a solution where you can move information from a billboard to an end user device. It is American Tower's hope to do so in the future. For example, if you see an advertisement for a local bakery as you pass a billboard and you've chosen to opt-in to a particular app, a coupon or a message will be pushed to your phone advertising baked goods at that specific (bakery) location.

Tarby summarized the details of the proposed zoning ordinance as submitted on the application. He emphasized the purpose and intent to establish guidelines; definitions such as highway, specifically I-93; public benefit such as Amber Alerts and Weather information; eligibility; location requirements; dimensional standards including the maximum height allowed for a building in the corresponding zoning district which is 80'; design standards; noted the duration of the message shall be no less than ten (10) seconds; appearance; landscaping, fencing; maintenance; and acknowledged the fact that a billboard would only be allowed through the application of a Special Permit being granted by the City Council.

Tarby stated that 10 Presidential Way is the last developed lot in the City of Woburn before the Wilmington line. The technology that is used today protects neighboring properties from glare, billboards provide local and state public service announcements, discounted rates for local advertisers, and annual revenue for the city through a negotiated development agreement.

Tarby further stated that this particular ordinance will have no adverse impact on the properties in the area due to its location. Allowing billboards in these particular zoning districts is an effective way to deal with billboards in a very selective and sensible basis that will effectively cover the Woburn area with minimal impact. He does not see any adverse impact in the area where the MBTA billboard on 128 was installed last year and stated he feels that billboards in the two zoning areas that are noted in this ordinance would create far less impact than the MBTA billboard.

Ventresca inquired if the applicant is proposing to erect the billboard on their current tower or use a different location on their property. Ruotolo responded that the Special Permit they received six years ago prohibits signs on the tower. There is currently a pylon sign on the property that advertises American Tower and the proposed billboard would be in that location.

Callahan inquired as to the number of billboards there are currently on I-93 South from the New Hampshire state border.

Tarby and Callahan had a brief discussion about several billboards/signs along I-93 North and South from the state line to Boston and also on Route 128 within the Woburn area. Callahan stated Woburn's location is desirable, however is that what we want to see in the city?

Tarby questioned if the current billboard in Woburn on Route 128 is offensive to people and he personally feels many people do not even notice it; while adding the city does not receive any benefit from that particular billboard due to the fact it was installed by the state. However, the city would receive revenue from the billboards that would be installed under this proposed ordinance.

Ruotolo emphasized that if the ordinance is accepted, American Tower would still need to apply for a Special Permit through the City Council and stated he has experience with the process as they have previously received Special Permits for their building, the tower, and the smartpole. It is not the intention of American Tower to put numerous billboards up and down I-93, as their focus and goal is to put up one billboard as they are looking to develop an asset they can innovate with and engineers can design with.

Doherty asked for clarification on how the interactive billboards communicate with cellphones and noted he feels billboards are just an additional distraction to drivers on the road. Ruotolo responded the ultimate design of the interactive billboard will not be rolled-out until they've designed a safe way to do it. Ruotolo added that the interaction between the billboard and recipient would possibly be through an app or file manager in a cellphone. The billboard itself would not be interactive in nature, as it would be a static display that changes.

Doherty complimented American Tower noting they are a very progressive company, but feels strongly that billboards are a distraction to drivers.

Edmonds stated that his fourteen-year-old does not like the billboard on Route 128 due to the fact that she thinks it is ugly. He added that, theoretically, six or seven billboards could be placed within the proposed zoning area.

Edmonds further stated the he's been doing safety and security for fifty years and the number one cause of accidents is distraction. He's also been teaching driver's education since 1980 and it only takes one second to be distracted and cause an accident. Overall, he finds billboard to be unsafe and unsightly; driving through Woburn provides a nice view and would like to see the view not be obstructed with signs that make it look ugly. Residences across the highway from American Tower

on I-93 do not need the glare from a billboard. Tax revenue that would be generated from the proposal would be minimal and the benefits to the city are very small from what would be an ugliness. Lady Bird Johnson had a "Beautify America" campaign in the 1960's that took billboards off the highway.

Edmonds continued to emphasize he is a safety expert and that billboard are unsafe and ugly and only bring value to the people that own the property.

Tarby spoke to the technical aspect of the ordinance stating there is language in the amendment that will not allow billboards within 600' of each other and that could easily be increased to whatever number the Board may feel would be more appropriate. He added that the applicant would also need to meet the requirement of the Special Permit under the Zoning Ordinance before the City Council.

Tarby further stated that he also understands Edmonds' personal feelings regarding billboards and acknowledged that he is aware of the fact that Edmonds is a safety expert.

Edmonds opened the Public Hearing by asking if any audience members would like to step forward to speak for or against this matter.

PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Chris Owen, 3 Florence Terrace, Woburn, MA stated that he spoke against this same ordinance two years ago and questions why petitions keep coming back. He feels billboards are an assault on the environment and an assault on our senses. Lady Bird Johnson in 1965 started the Beautification of the Highways Act. Owen stated people driving into Boston are assaulted with billboards on the highway. He feels the only reason the current billboard is on Route 128 in Woburn is because it was a state project that could not be stopped.

Owen further stated there is a fear that billboards will propagate on the railroad tracks next to the new Woburn Mall redevelopment to assault their senses. Owen continued to speak about billboard-free cities, adding that billboards do not fit and they do not belong. He added that he is concerned with light pollution, pollution to the environment, and pollution to our senses; interactive billboards will create a Future Crimes type of environment (movie reference) where signs advertise at you and that is only going to make it worse.

Mr. Tim Swain, 29 Dragon Court, Woburn, MA stated he totally agrees with Mr. Owen. Swain stated it is his hope that everyone at City Hall "considers and looks at everything before anything goes up." Swain added that his house has always had sun and now he has new houses that are "shadowing" his house. He added that he does not have any sun in the morning and that a few people have fallen in his driveway this winter due to the sun not being able to melt the ice on the driveway because of the "shadowing" from the new development.

Swain further stated his oil and electric bill have also increased due to the fact that the sun is unable to hit his house. He added that he loves the sun hitting his house and that it helps his grass grow and he hopes the city will look at the big issue of "shadowing" for future projects.

Edmonds asked if there were any additional audience members that would like to speak during the Public Hearing. No additional audience members stepped forward.

Motion to close the public hearing made by Bolgen;

Seconded by Doherty;
Motion carried, 7-0-0.

Edmonds asked Orr if staff has a recommendation to provide on this matter

Orr stated staff recommends the proposed zoning ordinance not be adopted based on this evening's discussion and the past hearings and recommendation from two years ago. He added that, based on the stated feedback of the Board, billboards have been characterized as a blight to residents and passersby alike, and staff believes that allowing billboards through a zoning change of this type would make it very difficult to turn down similar requests to allow billboards elsewhere in the city.

Motion by Doherty to send an unfavorable recommendation on the proposed zoning text amendment to the City Council;
Second from Turner;
Motion carried, 7-0-0.

24 FLAGG STREET DEFINITIVE SUBDIVISION

Orr reminded the Board that this two-lot subdivision was approved in November of 2017 and in order to initiate site work the developer, George Gately Jr., has submitted a proposed Dust Control Plan. The City's Engineering department has reviewed the document to verify the adequacy of the plan and stated the proposed methods are all standard practices used by construction companies in an effort to minimize airborne dust. He added that Inspectional Services will be monitoring and enforcing dust related issues.

Staff recommends the Board vote to accept the Dust Control Plan for the 24 Flagg Street definitive subdivision, as submitted.

Motion to accept the Board's recommendation made by Doherty;
Seconded by Ventresca;
Motion carried, 7-0-0.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Orr stated the next Board meeting is scheduled for April 23, 2019. The majority of the meeting is slated to be a workshop on the Subdivision Rules and Regulations with City Engineer Jay Corey and Traffic Consultant Rich Benevento in attendance. Other matters on the agenda may include: Acceptance of a covenant, HOA-related and easement documents and Mylar endorsement for the 12 Buckman Street definitive plan; Acceptance of the as-built plan for East Dexter Avenue; and requests for extensions to the construction completion dates for the Crossman Road and Legacy Lane subdivisions. He added that a public hearing for a Special permit/site plan review for modifications to Lord Hobo's facility at 5 Draper Street will most likely be on the May 14, 2019 agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no further business, Bolgen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 p.m.;
Seconded by Doherty;
Motion carried, 7-0-0.

Table of Documents Used and/or Referenced at Meeting

Planning Board staff report April 9, 219
Petition to Amend Zoning Code Section 13 and add Section 31
Excerpts from City Council meeting minutes from March 7, 2017;
Excerpts from Planning Board meeting minutes from January 24, 2017; February 14, 2017 and February 28, 2017
Planning Board Decision Letter regarding Billboards from February 14, 2017 meeting and February 28, 2017 meetings
Dust Control Plan for 24 Flagg Street Definitive Subdivision along with Engineering comment

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Smith

Karen Smith
Planner